



PRESS RELEASE

Media contact:
Michelle Haan
(303) 724-7814
michelle.haan@healthlinksflorida.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health Links™ Program Launches in Florida, February 2016

Community-based workplace health and safety program partners with the Florida Department of Health Manatee County and Blake Medical Center to help build healthier businesses, healthier lives.

January 28, 2016 – Health Links Florida will launch in February 2016. Businesses in the Manatee County community will be eligible to receive recognition through the Health Links Healthy Business Certification, which has been recognized as one of the top certifications for workplace health and safety for small businesses.

The expansion seeks to help Manatee County, Florida become a leader in the field, helping local businesses become recognized for their commitment to improve employee health and well-being.

Health Links launched in July of 2013 in Colorado and has since expanded to over 22 counties in the state, reaching 194 businesses and over 150,00 individuals. The mission of Health Links is to improve the health and well-being of working adults in an approachable and sustainable way. “We recognized that worksite wellness was gaining momentum across the nation, but there was little to no focus on businesses who need support the most – small business,” explains Lili Tenney-Starr, Co-founder and Director of the program. “We’re very excited and proud to be working with our partners in Manatee County to bring Health Links to Florida. It’s always been our goal to expand to new states, but our approach is very community, grass-roots based and is essential to have local partners engaged and the ones implementing it based on what works for the specific region.”

Last year the Florida Department of Health in Manatee County (DOH-Manatee), in partnership with the Manatee Chamber of Commerce, began convening a workplace wellness taskforce of local health experts and individuals passionate about fostering healthy lifestyles in the community. The goal was to assess how a workplace health and wellness recognition initiative might help move the needle in terms of adult health outcomes. DOH-Manatee took on the task of researching possible programs and identified Health Links as a nationally-recognized, evidence-based program.

“We were thrilled to find a program that was developed to meet the needs of small businesses and that is offered through a user-friendly, efficient web-based platform,” says Dr. Jennifer Bencie, Administrator, DOH-Manatee. “Workplace wellness plays an important role in improving the health of adults in our community. Through our partnership with Health Links, we hope to elevate the visibility of these initiatives and offer support to organizations interested in implementing health and wellness programming for their workforce,” Dr. Bencie added. “We are also extremely fortunate to have the Manatee Chamber as our partner and Blake Medical Center as the sponsor of this new initiative in the county,” she concluded.

As the sponsor of the Health Links program in Manatee County, Blake Medical Center is a vital partner in this effort to promote wellness and positively impact the health of the community.

Daniel Friedrich III, President and CEO of Blake, explains that, “As a hospital and one of the largest employers in Manatee County, we are committed to caring for the health and wellness needs of our community and our employees. Health Links is a great resource to help our hospital and our fellow Manatee County businesses ensure that we are all helping our employees live healthfully. A healthy workforce is a tremendous step towards a healthy community.”

The Florida Department of Health will serve as the home office for Health Links Florida. Businesses can apply for the Health Links Certification Program to receive feedback, recognition and connect with local resources to help them continue to create a culture of health. Businesses can find application directions and get started bringing wellness to work today at www.healthlinksflorida.org.

The Manatee Chamber of Commerce will host two informational sessions. Join us at the downtown Bradenton office on March 9 from 8 to 9 am or on March 11 from 8 to 9 am at the Lakewood Ranch office. Please RSVP to KimK@ManateeChamber.com or at 941-748-3411. For more information about this new healthy business program, please contact Karen.Ramirez@flhealth.gov.

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Health Links™ is a nonprofit initiative from the Center for Health, Work and Environment, within the Colorado School of Public Health. Health Links™ is made possible through a start-up grant from Pinnacol Assurance and funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Hollis Family Trust. In Manatee County, Health Links is partnering with the Florida Department of Health and is sponsored by Blake Medical Center. For more information contact Michelle Haan, at Michelle.Haan@healthlinksflorida.org.

